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From Marseille to Mecca: Reconciling the Secular and the Religious in Le grand voyage (The Big Trip) (2004)

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Abstract
By the early 1980's, a generation of children of Maghrebi (North African) parents born and/or raised in France started to become more visible, particularly after they organized a march in 1983 from Marseille to Paris under the slogan "For Equality and against Racism." This generation was introduced to the public as the "Beur generation." The word 'Beur,' coined by this generation, is the result of a Parisian back slang and means 'Arab.' It quickly gained popularity and has been used to refer to children of Maghrebi origins living in France. As much as it has been hard for the Beurs to integrate the French society, they have also been rethinking their Maghrebi cultural heritage. In this paper, I analyse a film entitled Le grand voyage (2004) where a Maghrebi immigrant father 'forces' his son to drive him from Marseille to Mecca so that the father performs the Hajj (pilgrimage). I aim at exploring the different elements that separate and reconcile the father and his son along this long journey.

Keywords
Islam, France, Beur, Maghreb, film, religion

Author Notes
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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I focus on the analysis of a road movie entitled *Le grand voyage* (2004) by Ismael Ferroukhi. In this film, a *devout* Muslim father 'forces' his young *secular* son to drive him from Marseille across Europe to Mecca, so that the father can complete the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj. I explore the different elements that separate and reconcile the father and his son, particularly religion and language. I will investigate how the journey from Marseille to Mecca allows them to reflect on their relationship both as father and son and as two human beings. I am interested in looking at the way the father and the son manifest their subjective experiences as their physical trip unfolds on an internal quest leading to self-discovery. I make use of Paul Ricœur's notion of narrative identity and its contribution to collective memory. I argue that personal experiences are not isolated reflections of the self and that each individual experience carries within itself traces of other "selves" whose recognition is quintessential to selfhood.

Ismaël Ferroukhi invites us to travel from Marseille with Réda, a young man born and enculturated in France, and his father, an old man who migrated from Morocco to France looking for a better life. Réda (Nicolas Cazalé) is obliged to drive his father (Mohamed Majd) to Mecca to perform the Hajj. Reluctant and unhappy with his father's decision to make the trip, Réda does not have a choice but to accept when his father asks him to drive. From the beginning of the trip, the

father/son relationship is not promising; neither of them tolerates the other and they barely communicate. Driving from Marseille to Mecca in a car is a decision that Réda does not understand as he grew up in France with little knowledge of his parents' culture of origin. The father, as a devoted Muslim, sees the journey as a fulfillment of his faith. The Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and there are many verses in the Qur'an that confirms its importance: "[…] and Pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above any need of the worlds."[1] Every Muslim aspires to do the pilgrimage at least once in his or her lifetime. Réda, forced to go on the trip, does not understand the importance of the Hajj until the end. As they get closer to Mecca, their relationship starts to improve and they no longer look at each other as "strangers." The movie ends with the death of the father upon his arrival in Mecca, and Réda heading back to France a different person after taking care of his father's funeral.

Le grand voyage unveils the generation gap that exists between Maghrebi immigrant parents and their children, who have been living in France all or most of their lives. Both the parents and their children were socialized differently: while the parents are very connected to their culture of origin, their children are much less so and are unable to negate the impact of their social upbringing in France. Réda being the youngest of the siblings was probably not

given much attention considering that his father is an old man and his mother, most likely, has no power over him. The trip is the last chance for the father to immerse Réda in his cultural and religious heritage. The journey, thus, creates moments of connection and disconnection between the two. Throughout the trip, the two characters' convictions separate them but the family ties they share bring them back together. Sharing the same car, the same hotel room and the same food and being together all the time obliges them to revisit their perspectives. They look beyond their relationship as father and son to be able to create a space for dialogue and accept each other's difference. For this acceptance to happen, the two characters have to look deep inside themselves. The journey, thus, is not only travelling from one place to another; it is a journey within the self, and the physical distance creates a separation from any connection with the worldly. The film narrative feeds on Islamic mysticism to universalize the experience of the father and his son.

Le grand voyage belongs to a body of films that are categorized as Beur films. The word "Beur" refers to French citizens who are born or raised in France and whose parents are of Maghrebi origins. The term "Beur" is the result of a syllabic inversion of the word "Arab." Though contested by many, it is still used to refer to artistic productions produced by or about the Beurs. I use the appellation "Beur" as an analytical tool to refer to films where the Beurs play leading roles. Since the 1980's, films about the Beurs have started to appear and since then a

number of filmmakers have made movies about the Beur experiences inside and outside France. Beur films generally depict Beurs' challenging experiences as they negotiate their position between their cultural heritage and their identity as French citizens.

Le grand voyage is Ferroukhi's first long feature film, and it was inspired by a childhood event that he experienced.[2] The film has been well received by critics and audiences, and it has participated since it was released in a number of festivals. The most prestigious award the film has received is the Leone del Futuro-Golden Lion for "Best First Film" at Venice Film Festival in 2004.[3] It is also the first film and the only one to date to get permission to film in Saudi Arabia during the pilgrimage, which takes place once a year.[4] In what follows, I will give a brief historical summary about Maghrebi immigration in France as it provides the context within which both Réda and his father have formulated their views.

BACKGROUND: CHILDREN OF MAGHREBI PARENTS IN FRANCE

Maghrebi immigration to France started to flourish after WWII, with the motive at the beginning being to make money and return home. The immigrants realized soon afterward that staying in France was better for them, especially after the French government encouraged them to bring their families during the early 1970's.[5] Staying in France was made even more desirable by the quality of life and

the benefits the French government offered. The French government's decision to have immigrant workers bring their families aimed at stopping further immigration or at least limiting its scope to family members.[6] When this policy did not work, the French government under Giscard d'Estaing offered an incentive of 10,000 francs to Maghrebi families to go back to their homeland and never return.[7] This policy was a total failure, and the number of immigrants from the Maghreb continued to grow.

By the early 1980's, a generation of children of Maghrebi parents born and/or raised in France started to emerge. This generation was introduced to the public as the "*Beur generation*," particularly after they organized a march in 1983 from Marseille to Paris on foot. Their objective was greater rights and recognition not only for themselves but also for their immigrant parents. One of their most evocative posters they used was an image of two feet, one wearing a western-style shoe and the other an "Oriental slipper." Through this March the Beurs were presenting themselves as French citizens who should have equal rights as French-born citizens without renouncing their Maghrebi origins. Though the Beurs attempted to distinguish themselves from immigrants in the sense that France was their homeland, their identity has always been connected to that of their parents regardless of their personal convictions. To the majority of "white" French, the Beur is a "Muslim by default"[8] even if he or she is an atheist. Moreover, equating Beur integration with Islamic fundamentalism has been an

issue since 1989 in what has become known as the "veil affair,"[9] and it has continued with the Pasqua laws[10] as Peter Bloom explains:

> In the summer of 1993, Jean-Marie Cavanna's prime-time show La Marche du Siècle presented a program entitled 'Les beurs', which contextualized the restrictive immigration framework implied by the Pasqua laws in terms of Islamic fundamentalism, rather than beurs' integration.[11]

The fact that Islam comes to the surface is not accidental. It brings to the discussion a long history of confrontation that goes back to the Middle Ages. Thus, it was no coincidence that in 1991, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, in an analysis of a poll on immigration conducted by *Le Figaro Magazine* and entitled "Immigration or Invasion?"[12] described immigration as a form of invasion. Interestingly, the picture featured on the front page of the magazine showed Marianne, the national emblem of France, overshadowed by a Muslim woman wearing a veil. The metaphor overtly stated that Marianne is French, has a name and represents reason and liberty while the veiled woman is Muslim, nameless and represents illiteracy and repression. This contrast is not different from the one we find in the epic poem *La chanson de Roland* written more than six centuries earlier where Muslims were depicted as idols worshipers and barbarians.

In the last thirty years, the Beurs have gained an increasing visibility. The Beurs in France are participating in enriching the culture of modern France

despite the fact that their artistic productions are often not recognized as being part of French culture. There are many Beur novelists, musicians, filmmakers, and actors, all of them constructing their *narrative identities* from within France. In doing so, whether recognized as such or not, they contribute to writing the history of France, and they are irreversibly unsettling the very notion of *Frenchness*.

The challenge that the Beurs' citizenship presents to French society is that their *cultural* and *religious* backgrounds clash with the French secular notion of citizenship. Unlike their immigrant parents or young immigrants their age for whom citizenship means legal papers and the right to work in France, the attachment that the Beurs have to France is more than that of an economic opportunity. Most naturalized Maghrebi immigrants still think of themselves as strangers because they have been *enculturated* in their home countries before moving to the *Hexagone*.[13] The Beurs, however, are brought up in France absorbing the French mode of living while at the same time sharing their parent's culture and religion. Accordingly, the Beurs, though they share culture, religion and ethnicity with immigrants, are different from them in the sense that their *Frenchness* is not *acquired* but *internalized*. Thus, both the French and the Maghrebi components are ingrained in the Beurs' narrative identity. These components underscore that Beur identity is transcultural in nature. The transcultural aspect of their identity places them in a constant confrontation with

their Maghrebi heritage and their French upbringing. In Beur road films, this confrontation is revealed progressively through a trip leading to a self-discovery.

BEUR ROAD MOVIES: A CHALLENGING FILM NARRATIVE

Beur road movies emerged during the mid-nineties with Karim Dridi's *Bye Bye* (1995). Beur road movies can be considered as a developed phase of Beur films in general.[14] The religious and cultural heritage that construct Beur identity has been overlooked for a long time but surges to the surface in road movies. In these films, the Beur characters' self-awareness of their parents' origin is finally recognized but is often not fully appropriated. Whether forced to make the trip to the parents' homeland or not, the journey affects the Beurs' experiences. Though the process of self-discovery is painful and challenging, it certainly alters the way they look at themselves.

The narrative in most Beur road movies is built on the voluntary idea of going to the Maghreb, but certain stories depict it as a forced trip —most often by their parents. In *Bye Bye* (1995), the two brothers, Ismael and Mouloud, after traveling across France, realize that France is their home country and they elect to stay there. In *Exils* (2001), Naima's journey is deliberate, and she manages to complete her trip to Algeria and reconcile with her Algerian identity. Azzedine, in *Ten'ja* (2004), is obliged to transport his father's body back to bury him in his

birthplace in Morocco and in the process begins to identify with his Moroccan heritage. In *Le grand voyage* (2004), Réda's trip transcends the discovery of his ethnic origins to a spiritual journey that reveals a universal side of his heritage. Though the characters' reasons vary, their quests are similar in the sense that they culminate not only in their finding their "roots" but also in acknowledging them.

As much as the Beurs have been struggling to defend their rights as French citizens, they have also been struggling to negotiate their cultural heritage. Though proud of their Maghrebi parents' heritage, they do not fully accept all the cultural and religious practices. This is due in part to the fact that they have been living in a secular state where religion is not taught in public schools as it is considered a private matter, not a collective experience. This generational conflict has inspired many French and Maghrebi filmmakers to make movies that present their perspectives on the issue. Though this issue is present in most films where Beurs appear as central characters, Beur road movies are particularly interesting in the way they have been tackling this struggle. The trips the Beurs make are generally from France to one of the countries in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria or Tunisia). The Beurs' physical presences in their parents' homelands evoke memories and build connections, but at the same time create distances because once there they feel alienated. In *Le grand voyage* (2004), the experience extends to religion to reveal another level of tension and misunderstanding between the Beurs and their

parents. My contention in this paper is that Beur identity formation is a site of struggle where the Beurs are constantly negotiating their position as individuals with respect to two paradoxical cultural experiences.

LE GRAND VOYAGE (2004): WHERE THE RELIGIOUS MEETS THE SECULAR

In *Le grand voyage,* at the beginning of the film, a series of shots inside the house clearly indicate the cultural background of the family. At the entrance, a close shot of Réda's face as he is taking off his jacket shows behind him a frame on the wall containing a richly decorated verse from the Quran. As the camera follows Réda inside, we notice how the entire room's décor is typical of Maghrebi fashion. In this scene, as Réda is talking to his father, we also notice the father with his prayer beads murmuring as he holds them in his hand stressing their presence and their importance. Though the sequence inside the house is short, it gives us a cultural context, particularly through its iconography. This is where Réda was born, and this is where he has spent his life. The structure of *Le grand voyage*'s narrative makes use of these elements to emphasize distance and proximity and their effects on characters. Réda probably has never noticed what is written inside the frame on the wall nor has he paid attention to the details of his parents' house (food, dress, décor, language. etc.) These details, however, are part of a collective memory that he shares with his family.

Paul Ricœur considers personal memory essential in constructing a collective narrative where subjectivity, as much as it is a personal experience, is also a shared one: "Memory is not only a private personal remembrance but also a commemoration which means a shared memory."[15] The concept of narrative identity that he posits reflects a subjective experience operating from within an historical process and seeking modes of identifications that are essential to a certain being-in-the-world. Narrative identities, according to Ricœur, are lived and told: "Testimony, in fact, starts with memory itself taken at its declarative level: memory is lived and told."[16] "Living" refers to the personal experience of selfhood, while "telling" makes of this selfhood a shared experience. The construction of the Beur identity narrative, its attachment to French national memory and its rootedness in the Maghreb are crucial to the understanding of the Beur's sense of selfhood. He or she preserves memorable and irreversible traces of his or her otherness. The function of narrative as constitutive of the individual's 'selfhood' experience is thus essential in understanding Beur identity.

The mise-en-scene of the house and the trip Réda is about to start are part of this collective memory. Growing up, the family home is the only place that connects Réda to his parents' origin; outside home, he is French with all that the word entails. Though he is not a practicing Muslim, religion is a cultural experience that Réda shares, and it constitutes a central part of his identity construction. When his father announces the news to him, that he is to drive his

father to Mecca, he could have said "no" but he does not. He, however, turns to his mother to complain. His reasons not to go are mainly related to his studies but he raises one question that reflects his minimal knowledge of his father's religion, "Why does not he (meaning his father) go by plane like everyone else?" This question will be answered later but at this point Réda does not yet grasp the importance of such a trip for his father and he does not dare to ask him directly. The authoritarian father figure is a cultural symbol that requires respect and obedience. In automatically acceding to his father's request, Réda is reminded of his cultural heritage that is part of his Maghrebi identity that he will not be able to rid himself of. That same night, we see him in an almost dark room looking at a map trying to figure out how far Mecca is from Marseille. While still in shock, he receives a call from his girlfriend, but Réda decides not to answer. His decision is significant as it shows, on the one hand, his inability to explain and convince her of his choice and on the other hand, his inability to defy a direct wish of his father.

To confirm his authority, at the beginning of the trip while they are on their way to Milan, Italy, the father decides to throw Réda's phone in a trash can while he is sleeping. The father does not want Réda to be distracted and wants him to focus on the driving. We do not see this as preplanned by the father but as the events progress, the father realizes the importance of this trip for Réda as well and the father wants to disconnect Réda from anything that would make him remember his *Frenchness*. When Réda requests to stop in Milan or Venice, the father refuses and

tells Réda that they are not tourists. The father's firmness does not please Réda, who, forced to be part of the trip, tries to find moments of escape to enjoy himself. Even the camera his brother gave him to take pictures is going to be traded for a sheep when they think that Mustapha, a Turkish traveler who helped them at the border and accompanies them for a while, stole their money in Turkey leaving them nearly penniless. The film narrative works so that the focus is always on the trip and the relationship between the father and his son.

The use of language is also crucial in the sense that it shows another level of the struggle between the two. Réda speaks French, and his father speaks Moroccan Arabic. For Réda, French is his mother tongue and for the father Arabic is not only his mother tongue but is a *sacred* language: it is the language of the Quran, and the language he uses when performing his religious duties. The journey, however, is not intended to show the importance of one language over another[17] so much as to reveal the conflict that arises between Maghrebi parents and their children over identity choices as they are reflected through language. Réda understands the language his father uses to communicate with him, but he responds in French. We can clearly see also that the father is able to comprehend and likely could respond using French, but he chooses not to. Using two different languages does not seem to hinder or block communication between the two. It is not language *per se* that is problematic but what it represents for each one of them.

Arabic for the father incarnates *culture, religion* and *origin* and his use of Moroccan Arabic emphasizes his strong attachment to his roots. Réda, however, shows resistance by being unwilling to speak it even though he does understand it. It takes Réda almost the whole trip to finally speak a few words of the Moroccan dialect. When Réda makes this attempt, we see how his personality has developed and his attitudes have changed. Réda's use of French reflects his awareness of his French identity of which he is proud while for his father French is merely a useful tool to navigate daily life. Réda's minimal use of Arabic is not like his father's use of French but is done as a recognition of his Maghrebi identity. Part of Réda's distance from his Maghrebi identity could be because his father did not insist on his learning Arabic. In fact, the father will confess at the end that it was his fault.

Réda is always at the threshold of meeting and recognizing his "Maghrebi" double. A feeling of fear and uncertainty are constantly haunting Réda as he drives his father to a place he knows nothing about. This journey to the unknown brings Réda to recognize the differences that exist between different worlds, civilizations, cultures, and languages. These worlds, though distinctive, each contribute to influencing and redefining his worldview. The distinction between what he believed himself to be and what this journey reveals to him add to the complexity of his character.

Réda's self- discovery of his "other" is revealed to him through this spiritual journey, and it offers him a new vantage point of looking at himself from an angle that he either ignored the existence of or avoided all through his life. Discovering his Maghrebi "other" is not an end in itself nor does it offer an alternative, but it is rather a process of experiencing his subjectivity. Réda's subjectivity cannot be complete without recognizing his '*internal other*.' Réda meets his 'other' as reflected in his father at first, but ultimately he finds it within himself. It was necessary for him to confront his Maghrebi double to understand better his selfhood. At this moment, Réda becomes self-aware of what he shares with his parents. He finally recognizes that he has become part of this collective memory and his journey is an integral part of it. His Maghrebi identity does not end at home anymore and his understanding of it is more inclusive.

In *Le grand voyage*, Réda plays the leading role in the film and being on a journey as his father's driver is very significant to the way he is presented as a subject. His assertiveness becomes pronounced through the father's comments that allow us to see how Réda wants to be seen. The act of driving gives Réda the means to become visible and to take control. Even though it was not his decision to go on the trip, the experience itself was not possible without him. Along the way, Réda's father reminds him numerous times that he should not speed, and to be careful; but Réda does not listen to him, especially ignoring the warnings while his father is sleeping. Réda's visibility and

assertiveness unfold into his willingness to speak for himself and to invite the viewer to see the world through his eyes. The father does not take into consideration Réda's plans nor does he give him time to prepare himself. Réda, able neither to disobey his father nor even to negotiate with him, accepts his will. This inability is not due to a lack of courage, but is more related to the cultural aspect that constitutes his relationship with his father. However, on the road he is able to break the rules and to forge a different relationship with his father.

As the journey reaches its end, Réda's lack of knowledge about Islam is emphasized when he asks his father, "What makes Mecca an important place to go to?" The father, though reluctant to answer, explains the importance of the Hajj and concludes by saying that the trip has taught him many things. Réda, using his limited Arabic vocabulary, says, "Me too." Thus, both father and son admit that the voyage was a learning experience. The father's explanation is not didactic as he never, throughout the journey, obliges his son to be nor blames him for not being a good Muslim. At this point, the generational gap and the identity conflict are no longer barriers between the two. The father recognizes his son's secular side, and Réda understands better his father's religious side. The film closes on a non-diegetic voice of Amina Alaoui singing a Sufi song of Ibn Arabi while the camera in a close-up shot tracks Réda's face inside a cab as he is leaving:

> My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, and a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Kaaba, and the tables of the Torah and the book of the Quran. I follow the religion of Love that is my religion and my faith.[18]

This is not the first time that a reference to Sufism is invoked. While in Turkey, Réda is sitting with Mustapha in a coffee shop/bar while his father is praying in a nearby mosque. Mustapha, trying to gain Réda's confidence, encourages him to order a beer. Réda, though reluctant at the beginning, makes the order. Mustapha then starts telling Réda a story of a Sufi who was asked whether wine is 'halal' (permissible) or 'haram' (forbidden). The Sufi replied, "If you pour a glass of wine in a bucket of water it will change color but if you pour it in an ocean it will not change the ocean's color." This story not only gives Réda an allowance to drink, but it also suggests that there are different interpretations of Islam. While the father represents a restricted understanding, Mustapha is more flexible. Réda, being exposed to both his father's and Mustapha's versions, increases his knowledge about Islam. The journey has a great impact on Réda's subjective experience and the film director emphasizes this visually as Réda is the first to appear on the screen and the last to leave it.

SCENES ANALYSIS: KEY MOMENTS IN *LE GRAND VOYAGE*

In what follows, I will analyze scenes that I selected to focus on the religious aspects of the film and their contribution in changing the perception of both Réda and his father. The first scene takes place at the beginning of the film when they are stopped at the first check point in Italy. Réda wakes up his father to ask him for the passports and his father, after taking out the passports and giving them to the police customs, tells Réda he needs to pray. Réda is astounded and says to his father, "You can't pray here, we are at the border." The father then replies, "Do you believe in God?" and leaves it at that. This scene shows how ignorant Réda is of his father's faith. The father's query is meant to raise Réda's consciousness and to question his faith. The father is implicitly questioning his son's education in French schools and its effects on him. The fact that their argument ends with a question to which Réda remains silent indicates that the issue of religion constitutes a major part of their disagreement. Réda's reaction to his father's demand to pray is rational to Réda's point of view and he does not expect his father to react the way he did. The father, however, insists on performing his prayer, reminding Réda and the viewers as well that his belief transcends space. God is everywhere, a notion that the Quran reinforces through the following verse: "And Allah's is the East and the West, therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."[19]

The second scene takes place about thirty minutes into the movie, when father and son have reached a moment of harmony that will not last long. To stress their loneliness, in a long shot, we see Réda and his father sitting on top of a mountain at what looks like a bus stop. They are surrounded by snow and covering themselves with blankets as they sit alone in the middle of nowhere drinking coffee. As the camera zooms in, Réda finally has the courage to ask his father directly why he did not travel by plane. The father answers, "Going on foot is better than riding a horse, riding a horse is better than going by car and going by car is better than going by boat and going by boat is better than going by plane." The importance of the trip to the father is the length of the voyage and the hardships the pilgrims encounter. Réda starts to realize that his father's choice is not arbitrary, and he begins to understand the meaning of his father's decision. This becomes even clearer at the end when the father dies in Mecca before completing the rituals as it indicates that the true Hajj is embedded in the intention and the journey itself. Though this scene brings them closer, incidents along the way will continue to generate arguments and trigger more conflicts.

The third scene I will analyze is the most significant one. As the two get closer to their destination, the gap between them deepens and they are about to split. The instance triggering this takes place as they continue to travel through Syria. Their car is overheating and they are forced to stop. Réda gets water from a fountain and his father follows him to the water. A woman holding her child asks Réda for

money but he refuses. Then she turns to the father, who is doing his ablutions to prepare for his prayer, and asks him. Even though at this point they think that most of their money was stolen by Mustapha in Turkey, the father gives some to the woman. Réda, infuriated by what his father has just done, comes running and takes back the money telling his father, "It has been two days since we have been eating eggs and you distribute money!" The father slaps Réda's face and returns the money to the woman. Réda cannot take it anymore and decides to leave his father and let him finish the trip alone. The father follows Réda, who climbs to the top of a hill, and tells him, "As soon as we get to Syria we will sell the car and you go back to France and I will continue by myself. From now on you are *free*." Réda does not understand what his father did with the woman and does not bother to ask. The father for his part does not explain anything. However, the impact of this on Réda is tremendous and we see it reflected in his behavior later on in the film when he gives money to a beggar at the end.

The last scene I analyze occurs when they arrive in Syria. The father is out praying once again and Réda goes to the car to look for his girlfriend's picture. As he is searching inside the car, he finds the money they thought was stolen. Réda's initial happiness at finding the money turns into sadness with feelings of confusion. Clearly, Mustapha did not steal their money and Réda's disturbed reaction shows his guilt at having wrongly accused him. Réda does not want to tell his father that

he was wrong about accusing Mustapha. Between his feeling of guilt and his decision not to confront his father, Réda invents a story that the French Consulate reimbursed them. Though Réda tries to avoid confrontation, his father, finding it hard to believe his story, pushes him to blow up in his face. Réda yells, "You don't understand and you have never understood anything! Don't you see we are not on the same wavelength?" and he slams the door and leaves. That same night Réda goes to a bar and spends most of the night there. When he comes back, he brings a girl with him. The father hears noises and wakes up to find his drunken son with a girl in the hotel room. For the father, Réda has pushed too far and he cannot tolerate his conduct anymore.

The next morning the father takes his suitcase and we see him walking alone while Réda drives along beside him in the car trying to apologize. Réda, feeling helpless and desperate, shouts out loud, "Don't you pardon in *your religion*?" The notion of pardon that Réda asks for transcends their relationship as father and son, as it questions the spirit of the father's belief. Réda challenges his father and asks him for forgiveness as a father and as a human being. In the eyes of the father Réda's sin is unforgiveable, but yet the father forgives him not just because he is his son but more so to show him the strength of his belief. The notion of pardon is recurrent in the Qur'an and the father, as a devout Muslim, knows well these verses. In one of these verses Allah says: "If you do good openly or do it in secret

or pardon an evil then surely Allah is Pardoning, Powerful."[20] The father sees himself incarnating Allah's message, reflecting it in his behavior with others. Réda's pleadings for forgiveness are a wakeup call for the father. These pleadings are ignored, even a son pleading to his father, until Réda invokes religion. The father had been so shaken by his son's actions that he had forgotten the teachings of "his" religion about forgiveness. Addressing his father using "your religion" could be an indication that Réda does not necessarily share the same belief as his father but, at the same time, perhaps he is not rejecting the concept of faith altogether.

The film does not necessarily put blame for the conflicts that arise on any one of the characters and the four analyzed scenes are representative of that. The two characters are both responsible for the choices they make with regards to their identity. The development of their characters is founded on their individual experiences and being forced to drive together challenges their convictions and tests out their abilities to accept one another's views of the world. The father starts as an authoritative, determined and serious character whose goal is to get to the Holy place. The son shows his position through his reactionary attitudes towards his father, sometimes verbally and other times using his body language. Throughout the film, the two characters each use their own knowledge to get out of difficulties. At times, the father's experience trumps Réda's and at other times, Réda's view on things is more accurate. The fusion of both perspectives gives their physical and

emotional journeys their strength and depth. The enactment of their subjectivities is constructed intersubjectively, allowing them to see the consequences of their decisions.

When in the first scene the father informs Réda that he is going to pray at the border, he does not seem too concerned about his son not knowing anything about Islam and he does not engage in explaining it. For his part, Réda does not appear to care much as he is so immersed in thinking about when he returns to his girlfriend. In the third scene as well, when the father gives money to the woman, no explanation is provided, instead what we witness is that the degree of misunderstanding rises and reaches its peak. Réda, who has remained obedient and respectful, is now rebellious and disrespectful. The lack of communication between the two is obvious, and most often when we see them talking they are quarreling. The film narrative is constructed so that each one of them exposes himself to the other. This exposure takes many shapes and forms, but it is genuine and honest. They both have their moments of anger, but they come to realize that each of them has learned something valuable from the trip. The father, before leaving to start his rituals, puts the picture of Réda's girlfriend where he can see it when he wakes up. The father's act shows that he understands that his son has the right to have a different life. The father finally recognizes and accepts his son's difference. Réda's narrative identity, though different, is part of a collective memory to which the father has contributed. Réda has his own subjective experience and does not have

to be a repetition of his father's to be part of this collective narrative. The father's acceptance of Réda's differences is an invitation for him to be part of what Ricœur calls "commemoration."

CONCLUSION

In *Le grand voyage* Réda has minimal connection with his cultural and religious heritage as he is so immersed in the French culture. He has become a son of the French Republic. He has a girlfriend, he knows nothing about Islam, and he is more concerned about his exams than driving his father to Mecca, a trip of a lifetime. He does not seem to understand the importance of the voyage and acts accordingly. The father is an old man who has spent most of his life in France but does not appear to have adopted the principles of the Republic. He has seen Réda growing up in front of his eyes, but he barely talks to him. *Le grand voyage* creates a point of convergence where the secular Réda meets the religious father. The fact that they travel together is forced on them in the sense that neither of them was happy with the company of the other. In a press release by Trigon-Film, Ismaël Ferroukhi said: "It was out of the question to defend any of them. Each one of them should defend himself."[21] His aim was not to take sides and his perspective remained objective and gave the characters the right to defend their own decisions. Ferroukhi in the same interview said that both Réda and his father learned something from the trip:

Réda, a better understanding of his parents' culture and religion, and the father a greater acceptance of his son's choices.[22] Tolerance is possible as long as both parties do not negate nor neglect the principles that constitute either's belief.

The vehicle of the film narrative is constructed around the importance of the journey and the place of religion. Between Marseille, the point of departure, and Mecca, the point of arrival the two characters cross seven countries in Europe and the Middle East to finally get to their destination. For Réda, his role is to get his father to his destination and get back as soon as possible, but for the father the journey is a spiritual reflection —the longer it takes, the deeper it gets. Both of these objectives are reached; more importantly their coming together as father and son and as human beings. The generational gap reflects an identity issue. The father has not changed much since he migrated from Morocco. He kept his language, his religion and his green Moroccan passport, and Réda, so detached from his father's generation, has an Arabic name but a French passport and speaks only French. While the father remained essentially unchanged even after thirty years in France, Réda has assimilated a French way of life, which in the process distanced him from his cultural background. The journey helped both find the missing part: the father recognizing his son's choices and Réda recognizing his Maghrebi double.

[1] *The Qur'an*, Trans. by M. H. Shakkir (New York: Elmhurst, 1999), 3: 97.

[2] Ismaël Ferroukhi, interview by Vittoria Matarrèse, October 22, 2007, http://www.arte.tv/fr/entretien-avec-ismael-ferroukhi/1723010,CmC=1722974.html.

[3] *Le Grand voyage* (2004) http://www.trigon-film.org/en/movies/Grand_voyage

[4] Ismaël Ferroukhi.

[5] Mahamet Timera, *Les Soninké En France: D'un Histoire À L'autre* (Paris: Karthala, 1996), 94. See also, Daniela Berghahn, *Far-flung Families in Film: The Diasporic Family in Contemporary European Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 30.

[6] Kenan Malik, *The meaning of race: Race, history and culture in Western society* (N.Y: New York University Press 1996), 27.

[7] Jane Freedman, *Immigration and Insecurity in France* (Burlington: Ashgate Limited, 2004) 35-36. See also, Georg Menz, *The Political Economy of Managed Migration: Nonstate Actors, Europeanization, and the Politics of Designing Migration Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 59.

[8] Malek and Kader Chibane, "Le cinéma postcolonial des banlieues renoue avec le cinéma politique," *Mouvement* 27/28 (2003), 35.

[9] Richard T. Antoun, *Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Movements* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 144-5.

[10] Charles Pasqua initiated Pasqua Laws known also as "zero immigration" in 1993 when he was minister of interior. Pasqua's policy aimed at controlling immigration and restricting entrance to France. The waiting time for family reunion was also increased. For more information, Vincent Fangen, Xavier Engels and Marie Lambert, "France: Diversity in the Republican Nation," in *Inclusion and exclusion of young adult migrants in Europe: Barriers and bridges* eds. Katrine Fangen, Kirsten Fossan, and Ferdinad A. Mohn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) 177.

[11] Peter Bloom, "Beur Cinema and the Politics of Location," *Social Identities* 5, 4 (1999), 481.

[12] Valéry Giscard d'Estaign, "Immigration ou Invasion?" *Le Figaro Magazine*, 21 September 1991, 48-57.

[13] Based on its geographical shape France is also known as the *Hexagone*. It generally refers to continental France excluding the overseas territories.

[14] Yahya Laayouni, "Redefining Beur Cinema: Constructing Subjectivity through Film," (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2012.

[15] Paul Ricœur, "Fragile identité : respect de l'autre et identité culturelle," Congrès de la (Lecture, Fédération Internationale de l'Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture. Prague, October

2000) http://www.fondsricoeur.fr/uploads/medias/articles_pr/fragile-identite-v4.pdf

[16] Paul Ricœur, "Entre la mémoire et l'histoire," *Transit- Europäische Revue*, 22 (2002), http://www.iwm.at/read-listen-watch/transit-online/entre-la-memoire-et-lhistoire/

[17] Mureille Rosello, "Ismaël Ferroukhi Bablized Road Movie," *Thamyris/Intersecting* 23 (2011), 267.

[18] Reynold A. Nicholson, trans., *The Tarjuman al-Ashwaq* [1911]. http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/taa/taa14.htm

[19] *The Qur'an,* 2: 115.

[20] *The Qur'an*, 4: 149.

[21] Press Release (in French) https://www.trigon-film.org/fr/movies/Grand_voyage/documents/dossier_de_presse[fr].pdf.

[22] Ferroukhi, trigon-film.org

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